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SUBJECT: SERB AND KOSOVAR WOMEN LEADERS MEET IN VIENNA

11. (U) Demonstrating her continuing interest in international women's diplomacy, Austrian foreign minister Ursula Plassnik hosted a meeting of prominent women from Serbia and Kosovo in Vienna November 5-6. The choice of dates was deliberate - to coincide and contrast with another round of troika-led status talks in the Austrian capital. Participants in the symposium called "Shaping our European Future - Networking of Serbian and Kosovar Women," included Minister of Youth Snezana Samardzic-Markovic and Deputy Foreign Minister Milica Delevic from Serbia, Kosovar politicians Nekibe Kelmendi and Edita Tahiri, Serbian human rights activist Natasa Kandic, the women's rights activist and chairperson of the Kosovar public broadcasting corporation Vjosa Dobruna, as well as Radmila Milivojevic, Vice-President of the Serbian Economic Chamber, and Flaka Surroi, Director of the largest Kosovar media group.

12. (U) Opening the event, Plassnik emphasized the conference sought to seek common ground between the parties and build confidence in areas not adequately addressed so far by the status talks. "What we need is a broad, more intensive dialogue between neighbors and targeted networking. ... We have to mobilize people who are able to build confidence in Serbia and Kosovo. Regardless of what Kosovo's status eventually turns out to be, the people of Kosovo and Serbia will continue to be neighbors," emphasized Plassnik.

13. (U) After the two-day session, news reports noted that, while Kosovo Albanian and Serb women had agreed on a common European perspective for their regions, they had not moved on their entrenched positions regarding the future status of Kosovo. According to Serb State Secretary for Labor and Social Affairs, Lilijana Lucic, Serb participants had focused on issues such as poverty, unemployment, inadequate educational infrastructure, while their counterparts from Pristina had almost exclusively emphasized the political dimension of the problem. Plassnik said the meeting had helped to overcome mental barriers on both sides. Some proposals put forth at the conference, such as school partnerships between Kosovar and Serb schools and strengthening regional networks of female entrepreneurs, were encouraging signals, Plassnik concluded.

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